

Safe method:

Ready-to-eat foods

It is important to handle ready-to-eat foods safely to protect them from harmful bacteria.



What are ready-to-eat foods?

Ready-to-eat foods are foods that will not be cooked or reheated before serving. These include salads, garnishes, cold sauces (e.g. yoghurt and mint), chutneys, ice cream, desserts, and foods that you have cooked in advance to serve cold.

Safety point

To protect foods from harmful bacteria:

- keep ready-to-eat foods separate from raw meat/poultry and eggs
- make sure work surfaces, chopping boards, knives etc. are clean (and disinfected if you have prepared raw meat/poultry)
- keep ready-to-eat foods covered

Why?

This is to prevent harmful bacteria getting onto the foods. This is especially important for ready-to-eat foods because they will not be cooked or reheated before serving.



How do you do this?

List the types of ready-to-eat food you use:

Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to store and prepare the food, if these are available.

The manufacturer's instructions are designed to keep the food safe.

Are you confident that you do this for all ready-to-eat foods where instructions are available? Yes

When preparing vegetables and salad ingredients:

- peel, trim, or remove the outer parts, as appropriate
- wash them thoroughly in clean drinking-quality water

If you have prepared salad ingredients or vegetables that have dirt or soil on the outside, clean chopping boards and work surfaces before preparing other foods.

The dirt on vegetables and salad ingredients can contain harmful bacteria. Peeling and washing helps to remove the dirt.



Do you do this? Yes
If not, what do you do?

Safety point

Make sure you keep ready-to-eat foods cold enough. See the 'Chilled storage and displaying chilled food' safe method in the Chilling section.

Do not use ready-to-eat foods after the 'use by' date, if there is one.

For food you have prepared, or removed from its original packaging, it is a good idea to keep track of when food should be used or thrown away.

Why?

If these types of food are not kept cold enough, harmful bacteria could grow.

You should never use food that has passed its 'use by' date because it might not be safe to eat.

How do you do this?

Do you do this? Yes
If not, what do you do?



What to do if things go wrong

- If you think that a food delivery has not been handled safely, reject the delivery.
- If ready-to-eat vegetables or salad ingredients have not been washed properly, wash them following the advice on the front of this sheet and clean any work surfaces etc. they have touched.
- If ready-to-eat food has been prepared on a work surface or with a knife that has been used for raw meat/poultry or eggs, throw the food away.
- If ready-to-eat food has not been chilled safely, throw the food away.

How to stop this happening again

- Review the way you store and prepare ready-to-eat foods.
- Train staff again on this safe method.
- Improve staff supervision.



Write down what went wrong and what you did about it in your diary.

